**Student Learning Outcome Assessment Plan**

The Department of Psychology has chosen to examine student performance in the Psychology 400 level Writing Intensive (WI) courses as a measure of student learning in written communication within the discipline. Students typically enroll in this course at the end of the Baccalaureate program and have completed all core and supportive coursework for their degree.

According to the APA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Psychology Major (2013), students should demonstrate competence in written communication as one of the skill-based goals of a baccalaureate program. APA recommends that as a discipline specific writing course, students should be able to write a cogent scientific argument, present information using a scientific approach, critically evaluate empirical studies and engage in discussion of psychological concepts, explain the ideas of others, and express their own ideas with clarity.

The Writing Intensive designation guidelines at UMBC require: 1) Effective writing for critical inquiry and/or the presentation of scholarly research, 2) Students to submit at least 3000-3750 words (12-15 standard pages) of graded finished written assignments (In-class tests, drafts, un-graded journals, exercises, and similar informal assignments are considered supplemental. ), 3) Opportunities for extensive feedback and/or revision, typically on two or more papers outside of class (if a single term paper is used, there must be an opportunity for a formal revision and feedback stage), 4) Evaluation of student learning on the basis of effective writing as well as content, 5) Use of class time to provide guidelines for written assignments in the discipline, 6) Inclusion of the practice of academic integrity as it applies to written assignments (consistent with UMBC’s Academic Integrity Policy), and 7) Specific statements in the syllabus indicating how the course fulfills the WI requirement.

**The APA goal: Demonstrate effective writing for different purposes**

Acknowledging professional organization guidelines, our 2012 Academic Review, and the University’s commitment to improving students’ communication skills, the department of Psychology will assess a key written assignment in the 400 level WI course in Fall 2015, Spring 2016, and Fall 2017. This work sampling approach will use a common rubric to assess student learning and performance.

The following chart provides indicators to measure student progress toward meeting this goal across five dimensions identified by reviewing various rubrics in existing psyc400 WI courses this semester. Faculty teaching the WI course will complete for each student's written project or final paper (whichever is most relevant to the WI course's learning outcome).

| **Dimension** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Organization** | 1) Organization of the paper is completely and clearly outlined and implemented. | 1) Organization of paper is clear in parts with some minor issues in clarity. | 1) Organization of paper is vague, or not consistently maintained. | 1) There is no organizational flow to this paper |
| **Clarity** | 1) Thesis statement, position, argument, or exceptions are clearly stated. | 1) Thesis statement, position, argument, or exceptions are stated. | 1) Thesis statement, position, argument, or exceptions are vague. | 1) Thesis statement, position, argument, or exceptions are not apparent. |
| **Applying Psychological Concepts and Principles** | 1) Empirically-based Research/Theory selected is highly relevant and accurate  2) Empirically-based Research/Theory is presented accurately and completely ( the method, results, and implications);  3) Statistical data is interpreted/ summarized correctly using accurate reporting standards (e.g. significance, statistical symbols used in reports, etc) | 1) Empirically-based Research/Theory selected is mostly accurate and relevant  2) Empirically-based Research/Theory is presented but there are some unclear components or some minor errors in the method, results or implications  3) Statistical data is generally interpreted/summarized correctly using accurate reporting standards (e.g. significance, statistical symbols used in reports, etc) | 1) Empirically-based Research/Theory selected is relevant to the topic but is vague and incomplete  2) Empirically-based Research/Theory is presented but has inaccuracies. There are major errors or incomplete components with method, results or implications.  3) Statistical data is selectively interpreted/summarized, but there are major errors in using reporting standards correctly or accurately (e.g. significance, statistical symbols used in reports, etc) | 1) Empirically-based Research/Theory is lacking in this paper  2) Empirically-based Research/Theory has major inaccuracies. Lacks or has significant errors with method, results or implications.  3) Statistical data is not interpreted/summarized correctly or accurately (e.g. significance, statistical symbols used in reports, etc) |
| **Critical Thinking**  **And Creativity** | 1) Relationship between research and application is clearly articulated and accurate. Understands meaning of research findings.  2) Conclusion is clearly stated and connections to the research and application of findings are clear and relevant. The underlying logic is explicit  3) Very insightful or creative | 1) Relationship between research and application is mostly clear and complete, or has some minor errors. Some errors in meaning of research findings  2) Conclusion is stated and connections to research and application of findings are mostly clear, some aspects may not be connected or minor errors in logic are present.  3) Insightful or creative | 1) Relationship between research and application is basically clear but incomplete, or has several errors. Minimal misunderstanding of meaning of research findings  2) Conclusion is stated and connections to research and applications of findings are unclear or just a repetition of findings without explanation. Major errors in logic are present. Underlying logic has major flaws.  3) Few insights or creativity | 1) Relationship between research and application is unclear or missing, or has major errors. Does not understand meaning of research findings  2) Conclusion is stated but has no connection to research and application of findings. No underlying logic presented.  3) Lacks creativity or insight |
| **Dimension** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **Writing skills** | 1) Paper is coherently organized and the logic is easy to follow.  2) There are no spelling and grammatical errors; appropriate for professional standards and convention  3) Terminology is used appropriately.  4) Writing is clear and concise; length appropriate for purpose  5) Writing style and format is appropriate to the audience (lay, peer, professional)  6) Responds professionally and adequately to feedback to improve writing quality | 1) Paper is generally well organized and most of the content is easy to follow.  2) There are only a few minor spelling or grammatical errors, but appropriate for professional review standards and convention  3) Terminology is used appropriately with minor edits.  4) Writing is mostly clear but may lack conciseness  5) Writing style and format is appropriate to the audience, but needs a few changes (lay, peer, professional)  6) Responds adequately to feedback and makes most changes to improve writing quality | 1) Paper is organized in some areas, and is difficult to read – does not consistently flow logically from one part to another.  2) There are several spelling and/or grammatical errors  3) Terminology not used appropriately and requires many edits  4) Writing lacks some clarity and conciseness  5) Writing style and format is generally appropriate to the audience, but needs many changes (lay, peer, professional)  6) Responds selectively to feedback and makes a few changes to improve writing quality | 1) Paper is poorly organized and difficult to read – does not flow logically from one part to another.  2) There are major spelling and/or grammatical errors  3) Terminology not used appropriately and requires major edits  4) Writing lacks clarity and conciseness  5) Writing style and format is not appropriate to the audience, (lay, peer, professional)  6) Does not respond to feedback and makes minimal changes to improve writing quality |
| **Terminology** | Accurate and consistent use of discipline specific terminology | Paper generally uses discipline specific terminology for the course. | Paper uses discipline specific terminology from the course, but some incorrect application. | Paper does not apply terminology from the course or uses superficial terms incorrectly. |
| **APA format - as required in the specific course** | Paper is written using APA format | Paper generally follows APA format, but has minor citation issues. | Paper generally follows APA format, but lacks full compliance with body of paper and citations. | Major errors in APA format throughout the submission |